

A Special Education Success Story With ADD And ADHD

By Claudia Mann

The Problem In our rapidly moving culture, special education students, diagnosed with ADD or ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) are an ever-increasing challenge for teachers. Having taught in some capacity for nearly 40 years and being a parent of an active little boy, I have studied these conditions with immediate personal interest.

Holding Their Attention Early in my work with the attentionally challenged, I observed that if the learning activity were engaging enough, many of these students could hold attention for long periods. Special Education students diagnosed with ADD or ADHD often have the ability to attend for long periods working with computers or video games. I wondered, could the problem lie more in the pace of the learning activity?

Give Them What They Need Subsequently, I began to provide activities in my classroom that had some of the same qualities of the immediate response achieved in those computerized attention-holders. One of the most successful of these was the excavation of fossils.

The Setup Fossil excavation was a 6-week class - more of a club, really ? in which students excavated a real fossil fish from a soft rock matrix. This time the class was made up of many special education students with various learning challenges, especially ADHD. The outcome of the class was remarkable.

Getting Their Interest and Attention We started with a sort of guessing game involving fossils hidden in velvet bags and moved quickly into individual excavation of the fossils. Within minutes, my work was done; the students worked independently for the remainder of the two-hour class. My hardest work that day was to enforce clean-up-the students simply didn't want to stop working.

Tools And Supplies The only tools needed for this activity were small screw drivers-the sort that are available from any hardware store in a set of increasing sizes beginning with an eye-glass tool . I also provided magnifiers of varying types. The most sought after were the dissecting microscopes, which gave the individual the best view of the fragile fossil. However, much of the work could be easily accomplished using the naked eye or a magnifier in a stand, just to leave the hands free.

And Then There Are the Behavioral Challenges I was presented with a new challenge about halfway into the second class: a behaviorally disruptive student who had been removed from another class. I did what I could to introduce him to our work and bring him up to speed. His initial work was little more than digging a hole through his rock, paying little attention to the fossil it contained.

Success! Then a wonderful thing happened. Another boy, a challenging special education student who generally had little academic success, began to teach. You see, this boy was enthralled with digging out the fossil and he was having incredible success. He single-handedly took over and my work was done.

About the Author

Claudia Mann is a teacher and contributor to <http://www.fossils-facts-and-finds.com> where you will find fossil lesson plans and activities for your classroom or home school setting. She and her husband own <http://www.fossilicious.com>. This is the place to find all the fossils needed for the lessons at prices teachers can afford.

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